



*Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston*

*Office for Communications*

**ARCHDIOCESE OF GALVESTON-HOUSTON**

**Media Advisory**

For immediate release

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**KHOU Response**

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston is committed to rebuilding the trust of the faithful, especially those personally affected by the clergy abuse scandal. One of the ways we are currently working to achieve this goal is by engaging a highly-respected, independent consultant and giving them unfettered access to Archdiocese records to help produce a list of priests credibly accused of sexually abusing a minor dating back to 1950. We will produce this comprehensive list by the end of January 2019, and cannot address your questions related to it at this time as we do not wish to compromise the integrity of this important work by discussing it before we have the full facts assembled. Also, we have previously responded to your requests for an interview and our response remains unchanged.

Regarding Father Peterson, he was immediately removed from ministry when the allegation was received and throughout the criminal and civil processes. In spite of being “no billed” by the grand jury, Peterson was later involuntarily laicized — or “defrocked” as a priest — by Bishop Fiorenza.

We want to make perfectly clear that we categorically dispute each of the contentions made by the persons referenced in Question 4. Cardinal DiNardo has never been comfortable with the ring tradition and he absolutely did not require or suggest that his ring be kissed. Unlike their recollection he recalls apologizing to the family no fewer than three times; and of course he offered pastoral care to the family.

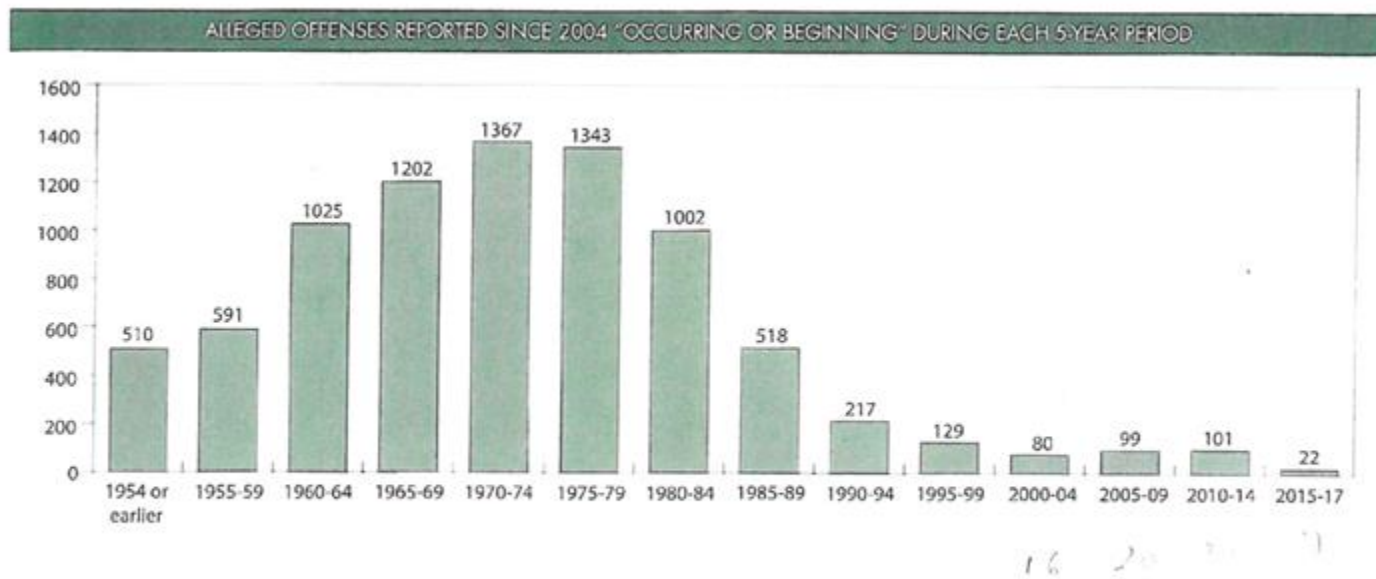
Allow us to add:

\* The Archdiocese continues to encourage anyone with any information about potential abuse of minors to inform civil authorities immediately.

\* As Cardinal DiNardo has pledged, we have been cooperating fully, and will continue cooperating fully, with any investigation into any allegation of abuse against minors.

\* Cardinal DiNardo has already met with a number of persons who have alleged sexual abuse against themselves or family members. He remains committed to providing pastoral outreach to any victims of clergy sexual abuse.

\* Finally, the only acceptable statistic as it relates to the abuse of minors is **zero**. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, the average is down to seven cases per year nationwide in the most recent reporting period. Again, the only acceptable number is zero — but your viewers deserve to have the current state of the Church put in a factual context. The Dallas Charter reforms from 2002 have clearly had a material, positive impact in addressing this evil.



END

*Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston serves 1.7 million Catholics in 10 counties. It is the largest Roman Catholic diocese in Texas and the 5th largest in the United States.*

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As it relates to the clergy abuse scandal, the year 2002 is an important milestone. That was when the Church, in acknowledging that it had a serious problem involving a small minority of its priests, set in motion a series of processes for handling such matters — including notifying civil authorities. The document that contained these processes is commonly called the "Dallas Charter." The processes it instituted starting in 2002, which have been updated throughout the years, have one goal: the protection of children and young people.

The Archdiocese believes it was a recommendation in December of 2003 from the lay person Review Board (comprised of individuals with relevant experience) set up as a result of the Dallas Charter that launched the process to have Father Petersen laicized. Bishop Fiorenza had asked the Review Board to look into the matter and make a recommendation. After the Review Board recommendation the laicization process was begun in 2004 and approved by the Vatican in 2005.

Of course, when a priest is accused of wrongdoing, canon law affords them similar due process the rest of us in society have. The Church can try to provide supervision, which some argue is sometimes preferable to laicization for the protection of children for the simple fact that "supervised suspension" still gives bishops the ability to control the whereabouts of a wayward priest. He was on a medical leave living at St. Theresa's when the civil lawsuit was filed. He was still in residence there when the criminal charges were brought. Both matters were widely publicized. In 2002, the parishioners were also informed that Dennis Peterson suffered from a progressively serious medical condition as a result of a brain tumor. They were told that he was in residence at St. Theresa's but that he had no parish or school responsibilities and that the Diocese did not believe he was a risk to minors or anyone else. This may help some understanding as to why he lived at St. Theresa's and later at a Diocesan facility on Holcombe. Father Peterson died on July 12, 2007 of sepsis and pneumonia.

We hope this is helpful in providing context.



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